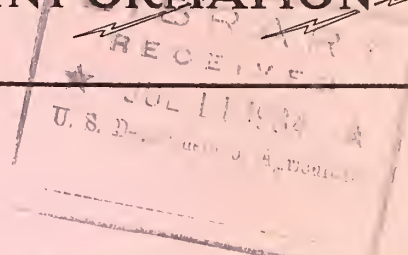


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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, July 18, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Preserving Fruits and Vegetables by Freezing." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

One of these days, you and I may be walking into the grocery store and buying our cherries or peaches, our fresh peas or asparagus by the block or compact package as calmly as we now buy by the basket. One of these days our surplus garden products may go to a freezing factory instead of a cannery. And the time isn't far distant when we'll be thawing out fresh strawberries on Christmas or New Year's morning getting ready for shortcake for dinner. You never can tell what may happen now that the scientists have learned so much about this new method of preserving fresh fruits and vegetables by cold instead of heat.

Of course, keeping food by freezing isn't a new idea. Long ago men discovered that meat or fish that was frozen didn't spoil. But we housewives have generally supposed until just lately that freezing always damaged fresh garden foods.

Pioneer work in the freezing of fruits was done by a Chicago pie baker, who began freezing cherries in bulk for use in pies nearly 40 years ago, and by Fulton of the Department of Agriculture, who successfully preserved strawberries in small packages in 1907. About twenty years ago, fruit growers in the Northwest began freezing barrels of berries and cherries to keep them fresh after the season for the use of bakeries, candy factories, restaurants and so on. This frozen-fruit industry was a wholesale business and the freezing was always done in bulk. But it was successful, so successful that about ten years ago scientists at the Department of Agriculture began to investigate the process to discover whether other fruits and also fresh vegetables could be preserved this way, and to find out whether these products would freeze and keep safely in small packages for home use.

That was ten years ago. They've been working on the subject ever since. And this spring they put on an exhibit showing what they had discovered. That exhibit was proof enough that a whole new field was opening up to help in the job of feeding the family.

One of the most striking displays was the frozen corn on exhibit -- ears of Golden Bantam, frozen on the cob, way last summer but not cooked until the judges were ready to taste it this spring -- some seven months later. I didn't have a taste, but the judges declared that it had no "cobby" flavor and was even sweeter than fresh corn from the field. Along with it were packages of corn cut off the cob and frozen, also some ears that were frozen husks and all.

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I also saw frozen asparagus and spinach, green peas, garden beans of several varieties. And I saw beautiful frozen cherries, dewberries, raspberries, peaches and strawberries. Many of these were frozen in paper cups, just the right size for home use.

Peaches have been a special problem in freezing. Some varieties come through freezing well; others may change in texture, flavor, aroma or color. Discoloring has been the chief difficulty in freezing many varieties of peaches. The scientists have found that in general the yellow-fleshed peaches freeze more successfully than the white.

That's one problem the scientists have had all the way through -- determining which varieties of fruits and vegetables freeze best and why.

Another problem has been the matter of freezing temperature. They knew that meat and fish must freeze rapidly, must be exposed to temperatures considerably below zero to keep successfully. But equipment that will give such low temperatures is costly to buy and to run, so fruits and vegetables frozen this way, of course, are very expensive. But fortunately for the future of this new process, the experiments proved that expensive, quick-freezing machinery isn't necessary. Fruits frozen in a cold storage room held at 17 degrees above zero were just as good as those frozen way below zero -- better in some cases. Cherries preserved at 16 degrees above kept well, but those of the same variety frozen at 80 degrees below were discolored and had a poor taste.

Still another problem that worried the scientists was the matter of spoilage in the vegetables, especially spoilage from that dangerous organism called botulinus which has caused so much trouble in canned vegetables, not processed with enough heat. As you know, this deadly organism grows only in the non-acid foods -- canned vegetables and meats. It doesn't develop in the presence of acid, so tomatoes and most fruits are immune. Well, happily the scientists found that botulinus won't grow and produce its toxin at thirty degrees or below. Then, of course, vegetables are frozen raw. Cooking them is an added precaution. All frozen food is best used immediately after thawing. It won't keep on standing, once it is no longer frozen. So if you cook your frozen vegetables as soon as they thaw, you never need to worry about botulinus poisoning anymore than you would in fresh vegetables.

One great advantage that frozen fruit has over fruit shipped in from a distance is its flavor. Fruit that must be shipped is picked green in order to stand the trip. But frozen fruit can grow ripe on the trees or bushes, can acquire its natural, sweet, ripe flavor in the sunshine before being frozen.

As I said, we may be eating raspberries and cream on snowy days in January and fresh strawberry shortcake on Christmas in the near future, and we probably will be taking such miracles as a matter of course. When we can buy these frozen fresh foods at any grocery store, they won't be as expensive nor as wasteful as the out-of-season products that now must travel a great distance.

Keep your eyes open for new developments in this line. They're coming. And when they arrive, they'll be one more aid toward feeding your family well, easily and economically.

